

WHITE LOTUS DAY

MAY 8, 1929

A TRIBUTE OF LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO

H. P. BLAVATSKY

FROM

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THIS 8th day of May has been kept all the world over since the first anniversary in 1892 was observed. And it is well, I think, that, in this hurrying and changing life, a life which presses upon us so continually, so persistently, there should be these days of memorial when for a time we draw ourselves apart from the temporary, and realise the Eternity in which we live.

A very fine phrase may be familiar to many of you in what is called the Hebrew *Apoerypha* (why "*Apoerypha*" I have never understood), and that phrase runs: "God created man to be immortal, and made him in the image of His own Eternity." Eternity is far greater, more real, than the "Everlasting" which we so often use mistakenly as though it were its equivalent. For the Eternal is the Ever-present, the Ever-existing, part of the manifestation of God Himself, in whose Image it is truly said He created man. In the quotations that we have listened

* An Address delivered at the Mortimer Halls, London.

to this evening, that is the idea that stands out, that whatever changes, *we* do not change in our innermost Being; in that image of the Eternal we exist, and the Eternal changes not, is not born, and never passes away.

And as it is said that man is created by thought it is well that among all the ever-changing and rapidly shifting scenes of life we should realise that that which is greatest in us does not change; it unfolds as a bud unfolds into the flower, in its successive manifestations in our mortal world. But while the manifestation in the mortal world is changing, that which manifests changes never. We need to be reminded of this, because in this lies the secret of our strength, the source of our peace. To those who realise their own Eternity what is there in the transient, changing world that should give them anxiety or fear? It is said in one of the Hindu Scriptures that Brahman is fearless—that splendid quality which shrinks from no danger, recognises no possibility of ultimate defeat. So on this 8th of May, year after year, there runs all round our world this assertion of the Eternity of the Self within our mortal bodies, and we take days to mark our sense of the Reality lest in all the rough and tumble of our mortal world we should lose touch with what we really are. For this is all-important. If man is created by thought, then that on which he thinks is of the most vital importance to his life and his growth. Every one who sets

his will to realise his own Eternity has found the great secret of peace; the peace that passeth understanding depends on our life in the Eternal; that cannot be shaken, it cannot change; it neither grows nor diminishes, though its manifestations may vary. Try to keep that in the background, as it were, of your mind, so that you are influenced by it in every moment of your life, coloured by it, whatever may be the shadow or the light, the passing phenomena of life; in the abiding in the Eternal is the certainty that cannot be shaken.

You will remember one phrase in *The Revelation of St. John*, where it speaks about "becoming a pillar in the Temple of God". When you become a pillar in that Eternal Temple, then there is nothing on earth that can shake you or deprive you of that eternal peace. The variety around us is more or less amusing or painful to look at; but it does not matter; it has in it no reality. Gradually, as we begin to fix our thought on the Eternal and to realise, to however small an extent, a little of its splendour and its beauty, then we begin to understand that it does not matter what happens around us, for the one thing that is really unchangeable abides always in our hearts. So we speak of "living in the Eternal" as the secret of peace. To remind us of that from time to time (because we so readily forget) it is well, I think, that we should have these special days on which we turn away from the changing and fix our thoughts on the Eternal.

The two who are most in our minds and in our hearts on this 8th day of May, are those who brought to us the Light—one of them a Messenger of the Great Lodge, the other her comrade who built up the organisation of the Theosophical Society in our world. H. P. B. was chosen to come out into the world in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, and chosen in that great Council of the Hierarchy who are the real rulers of our world. Before the choice was made there was discussion among them—for all who are of the Great Brotherhood have the right of speech therein, the youngest as well as the eldest. She was chosen, after discussion, on very definite grounds. I say "she"—I never quite know what to call her for she is neither quite a man nor quite a woman, if you take it that masculine and feminine are distinguished by different qualities. Most certainly she had the courage which is supposed to be the great characteristic of the man; but she also had the wonderful steadfastness which is seen, perhaps, most strongly on the feminine side. On the one side is the power of initiating great changes; on the other the power of nourishing those changes until they are definitely established and safe. So I say "she" because you think of her as H. P. B. and we have no word which combines the two. At the present time that same strong Spirit is enshrined in a man's form. The form matters very little. Whatever is best for the purpose of the

manifestation is chosen, and because there was a need that woman should be uplifted and should take her rightful place in the world as the comrade and friend of man, this mighty Spirit, masculine in courage but feminine in endurance—able to bear to the uttermost any pain that came her way, any cruelties that were inflicted on her, any attacks that were made against her—was chosen. [She was chosen also because she had the most remarkable body, as one of the Hierarchy said, that had been born for 200 years. And that body was the one which best, among the available disciples; could meet the materialism which appeared to be triumphant at that time. That Spirit, embodied in that wonderful form, was chosen for the great work of practically undermining and destroying the partial truth of materialism so that instead of the half-truths of the time, the whole truth might be presented.

You must remember that materialism at that time was very, very strong. I recollect that Ludwig Buchner said to me just about that period, that if I went to Berlin I should not find among the men who were leading the scientific thought of Germany, a single believer in Christianity. You may remember also that the name which was chosen for the scientific attitude of the day was that of Agnosticism—not a denial, but simply a statement that "we do not know"; that they were without the *gnosis*—the one knowledge which is the root of all true thought.

She was chosen not only for her wonderful body and her profound knowledge of Occultism, but also because through those, in the body which she wore, the deadliest blow might be struck at the scientific materialism of the day, so that practically you do not now find in science—modern science—that materialism which seemed to be impregnable in the last quarter of the last century. Among our scientific men to-day—the leaders of thought—you do not find the materialism which existed in the world when H.P.B. came to it with a message from the Great Lodge. Everywhere, I think, that is practically admitted now. A Roman Catholic priest once said quite openly and frankly that Theosophy had done one thing at least, it had destroyed materialism, and seeing that the Roman Catholic Church, as a rule, does not love Theosophy, that was much for a Roman Catholic to declare; and it is literally true.

Now there are two great ways in which materialism can be undermined, one by that inner intuition in man which you find in every faith in all ages of the world, that man is not mortal. You remember probably a phrase spoken by a Roman: "Not all of me shall die." All the arguments appeared to be in favour of that death of the man when the body passed through the great portal and set the Life free. And materialism had a foundation so strong from the standpoint of argument, the inductive logic, that it seemed to be an argument that you could not break. You may remember how

Clifford and many another pointed out that when the child was born the brain of the child showed very little sign of any form of thought; how the power of thought grew and developed as the brain grew and developed; how it could be suspended by a drug; destroyed apparently by a mortal poison; how thought and brain varied together; how thought grew with the growth of the brain, was injured with an injury to the brain. And then came the apparently irrefutable argument that consciousness shows itself in connection with the brain only, as far as they then knew, as it grows with it, increases with it, changes with it, can be put all wrong by drink or drug and recover itself if a remedy is brought, varies as the brain is more or less healthy, goes through a whole life, beginning as a mere seed in the babe, growing, expanding, increasing, and then slowly diminishing with age, until the lack of knowledge of the child reappears in the worn-out brain of the old man. How was that argument, apparently so perfect, to be met save by proofs, definite proofs so that the scientist might admit that he could not explain the human consciousness if he made it entirely dependent on the human brain? Science was groping after that, but only groping, when H.P.B. came. That was the attack she made by proofs that people could see and judge for themselves. She showed that thought could be played with by those who knew how to control it. For she made no secret as to the nature of the phenomena,

as they were called, that she so often showed. "Psychological tricks," she called them. That is perfectly true. She is often blamed for having said it. And yet that is exactly what they were, and they were done by means that can be explained. Let me take one that she sometimes did at Adyar among the older Theosophists. She would make herself invisible; sitting there in her chair, she would vanish. Presently she would appear again. What she never allowed to be done was that anyone should touch her place in the chair while she was invisible, because then the sense of touch would have told them that she was there as solid as ever and that she had not disappeared at all. You may say "What had she done?" That which you do when you put a straight stick in the water and it looks bent. That is exactly what she did.

When we look at a thing we always unconsciously see it in a straight line from the eye; we are accustomed to see in that way. If you could impose upon a person by deceiving the senses (as when you put a stick into the water and see it as bent when it was straight the moment before and is straight the moment after) that is as much a "miracle" as the disappearance of H.P.B. from the chair in which she sat and in which she continued to sit whilst she was invisible. What had she done? She had turned the ray of light, a perfectly simple thing and nothing so very remarkable if you remember that when you have changed the medium through which a thing is

seen the shape of that thing changes. Every child knows that when he puts a stick in water. She was in the chair all the time. She had learnt how to control some of the currents in the ether. As you now have wireless telegraphy, you understand that there can be vibrations controlled without having any wires or other things which they used to think necessary for the sending of vibrations from one place to another. That was all she did : she manipulated the ether, which is in layers denser or finer as the case may be ; just in the same way you have solid, liquid and gas which you cognise with your senses. Matter does not stop where the gases finish ; the ethers go on further, although the matter is invisible because it is so much finer.

Now the difficulty with the phenomena really was that they did not convince—they puzzled. But they made people think. A very curious illustration took place with Mr. Myers, whose name the elder among you will know, on this point. He was very much puzzled when he was at Adyar one time at the way H. P. B. made astral bells. All that she did really was to make a whirlpool in the ether and then clap, as it were, the sides of the whirlpool together so as to produce a vibration that became sound. "Well," he said to her, "if you will produce the astral bells in a tumbler that I hold in my hands between my knees, whilst you are a distance away from it, then I will never doubt again." She said "All right." He got a tumbler

and sat with it between his knees with his hands around it—and the astral bells rang out. "I can never doubt again," he said; but before a fortnight was over he was just as sceptical as ever! Why? Because it is the duty of the mind not to believe a thing for which it has not sufficient data on which to work. That is the only reason. The incomprehensible thing is always rightly challenged by the mind. The mind can only work on certain data presented to it from which it draws its conclusions. Leave out these data and it wanders about like a blindfolded man. The great value of H. P. B. to the scientific world was that she always said that these things were *not* miracles, but that they were simply due to the use of higher or different laws from those which they had discovered, but were as much within the realm of law as any phenomena which they understood. The inevitable result of that was gradually to take away the foundation upon which they had built up their scientific materialism. It was helped in many other ways, by the extension of psychological knowledge, by the study of dreams—that began seriously in 1830 from the western standpoint—then by the study of trance-conditions, creating trances in order that they might have the person under observation, and watch him and talk with him while in a trance, and so on. Any one of you who has read some of the literature of that subject will know how thoroughly the basis of materialism was shattered by the growth of that

higher psychology, aided by a study of dreams and trances, of the conditions in which the brain was paralysed but consciousness could still be communicated with. These investigations no longer seem miraculous, strange, impossible. They came into the realm of law and made part of the commonplace of science.

But in order to set scientific people on the way it was necessary, in order to stimulate inquiry, to put before them a number of things they could not explain, to make them try to discover, to try to find out whether they were really scientists who would not deny a fact because they did not understand it, but could be sure that there was some law of which the fact was a product, and that their business was to investigate and not to make mere guesses which apparently might have a basis in facts, but where the facts were not discovered. You may remember very well the way in which what is now called the galvanic current was discovered. Senora Galvani was skinning frogs to make some soup (not a very delightful idea to some of us). She tied the dead frogs' legs together and hung them over her husband's balcony, and the legs began to kick. She did not understand it, nor did her husband, but he used a remarkable phrase that it may be well, if you have not heard it before or have forgotten it, to remember. "They call me the frogs' dancing-master; but I know that I have discovered a hitherto unknown force in nature." There you

have the scientific spirit. There must be an explanation; search for it. Do not assign it to what you call the supernatural.

And the result of what H.P.B. did in those years of her life, in which she performed so many of those so-called phenomena, was that she forced people to realise that there were laws in nature that they did not understand and that she did, which they might understand if they chose to study as they had studied before they found the explanation of many other phenomena which once had seemed to be miraculous. So in a very real sense we look upon H.P.B. as the one who stimulated thought into the unknown, so that human consciousness refused to say that because a thing was at present unintelligible, it therefore implied a supernatural origin. The whole belief in miracles broke to pieces in face of these facts. A miracle has no weight now as a matter of evidence. It does not evidence anything except that someone knows more than you do, and can bring about a result that you cannot at present explain. But H. P. B. gave the key which unlocks so many mysteries. There have always been people who refused to be convinced by the miracle, beyond the fact that the person who performed it knew something they did not know. You remember that admirable Rabbi among the Jews, when two or three of them were disputing, and when one of them, in order to show that he knew more than the others, and that he was speaking the truth,

made a wall tumble down—a remarkable miracle that. The only remark his opponent made was: "Since when have walls taken part in our arguments?" That was the proper answer. Certainly find out how the man made it fall down. But it was no proof that he knew something which had not to do with walls—that was metaphysics—just because he was able to make a wall fall down. People don't use miracles now as arguments. That is one of the most startling changes, and the most significant. It has really changed the whole current of thought. It is no longer thought to be a miracle coming from God giving the right to teach spiritual truths with which it is not concerned, but only as showing that the person doing it knew a little more than others did about certain laws of nature, bringing study into a safe place, where the unknown was not the unknowable.

I do not know that any greater benefit could be bestowed upon the human race than that refusal to pretend to explain where they did not know, and to put down to some so-called supernatural force that which they could not explain by their knowledge of natural laws. And so that word "supernatural" has gone out of ordinary talk. People study. One result of that has been to stimulate the study especially of psychology, one of the oldest of sciences, as you know, in India, one of the most modern in the western world. Immense advances have been made in the West. More might be made, and more

rapidly, if the western mind was not so sure that it is very superior to the eastern mind, that the East has nothing to teach the West, while the West has almost everything to teach the East. Knowledge is not so geographical as that. There is the hope I think to-day that there may be co-operation between Asia and Europe (I am including America in Europe)—co-operation to investigate together side by side, each bringing its own comparatively developed science, and the two being welded into one, so that the knowledge of mankind may be increased. And in psychology the East is still far ahead of the West. There is the great science of Yoga, the power of learning how to concentrate the mind in a way which enables mind and physical body to be separated, to leave the body unconscious at will but the consciousness to be more active outside the body than when limited by the inevitable limitations of physical matter. The whole of that splendid outlook for the future in which we see consciousness expanding and expanding, embracing more and more of this great universe, that really had its definite beginning in the appearance of that remarkable, that wonderful woman, who faced ridicule, insults, slander of the most terrible kind, in order that she might open the door for others, in order that she might teach others how to tread the path that she had trodden. Well may we keep her memory green. To many of us she has been the Light-bringer. To many of us the one who rescued

us from despair almost of the world. I who passed through unbelief, who rejected all that I could not prove, or was not on the way to prove, I used to despair when I visited the poor in the slums of East-End London, when I saw the people when they closed the gin places come rolling out, swearing, cursing, fighting. I used to say to myself: "There is nothing that can ever help these except an earthquake which will swallow them all up and give room to a better race." But the Theosophy that she brought to us made despair impossible, and if you work, holding in front of you the knowledge of the certainty of triumph in the end, despair—the Giant Despair—cannot keep you in his prison. That perhaps is one of the greatest gifts she gave us. There is time enough for everything before you, time enough to learn, time enough to understand, time enough to develop into divine perfection. We can realise now the meaning of the words of the Christ: "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." All we need is time, and we have endless time, and within us that germ of Eternity which is the veritable image of God in the form of man. And so for us there is no despair; there is a deathless hope; there is a certainty of triumph. We admit, as was admitted, by the old Hindus, that there is a point in human investigation where intellect sinks back silent; but that intellect is not man's veritable Self. It is only one of the characteristics of the Divinity within. There is

time enough for us to unfold, time enough for us to discover, time enough for us to become in manifestation the God that we are, if only we will to become. And so everywhere there is hope for the lowest; everywhere there is realisation for the least developed. The God within is Eternal and knows no limits of time. That is the splendid truth that shines upon us when we recall the wonderful work of H.P.B., and there are many of us who feel to her a deathless gratitude, the profoundest reverence, gratitude that she showed the Light in the midst of our darkness, reverence because she sacrificed herself that she might share the Light she held.

